

\$2

FEBRUARY 1, 2022 | VOLUME 13 | ISSUE 3

YOUR DONATION BENEFITS THE VENDORS.
PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.

ARPA funds survey out now!
Affordable housing projects need
your support. **Page 9**



MEET YOUR
VENDOR:
**GARY
LEVERTT,**
PAGE 3

GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.



THIS PAPER WAS BOUGHT FROM

venmo



@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

from the **DIRECTOR's DESK**



Five years ago, my story with Groundcover News began as a customer. I would grab a coffee from Espresso Royale after class and a copy of Groundcover from Lonnie Baker to read on the bus on my way to work. I remember reading about Mercy House, which is now my second home, and reading stories featuring and written by folks that today I consider family.

Lonnie is the reason I found Groundcover News. This paper would not be in your hands if a Groundcover vendor wasn't hard at work, just as I wouldn't

have gotten involved with our street paper if not for Lonnie's contagious joy, stand-out U-M attire and consistency on the corner.

Selling Groundcover News is legitimate work, but more so it is a service to our community. Our vendors work in all kinds of weather to deliver you news and solutions from the ground up, and maybe a smile or laugh along the way. Each year at the beginning of February we celebrate Vendor Appreciation Week to go out of our way to show our vendors how much they mean to our community.

Thanks to generous holiday donations, this year we are subsidizing our vendor's purchases so they will get this issue half off during Vendor Week. Thanks to a grant donation from Kiwanis, we are outfitting every vendor with an embroidered Groundcover News beanie. And of course, we are celebrating daily with extra treats at the office!

That being said, we need your help. Look to the infographic on page 3 to see ways you can participate!

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letter to the **EDITOR**

I enjoyed Jay Gordon's article in the January 14th issue, regarding his time as a cook in the military. I especially appreciated his comments regarding the importance of perception. "Perception and what is being seen and shown are important but truth is what really matters." It reminds me that what I see and perceive isn't always the truth and maybe I need to dig a little deeper.

— Cathy Padron

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

CREATING **OPPORTUNITY** AND A **VOICE** FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHILE TAKING ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for \$2, keeping all income and tips from each sale.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. We are proudly a member of the International Network of Street Papers.

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GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES				PACKAGE PRICING
Size	Black/White	Color	Dimensions (W x H in inches)	
1/8	\$110.00	\$150.00	5 X 3 or 2.5 X 6.5	Three Months/Six Issues: 15% off
1/6	\$145.00	\$200.00	5 X 4	Six Months/Twelve Issues: 25% off
1/4	\$200.00	\$265.00	5 X 6.25	Full Year/Twenty-four Issues: 35% off
1/2	\$375.00	\$500.00	5 X 13 or 10.25 X 6.5	Only run for two weeks/one issue: 40% off
full page	\$650.00	\$900.00	10.25 X 13	Additional 20% discount for money saving coupons

MEET YOUR VENDOR



Gary Levertt, vendor No. 544

In one sentence, who are you?
I am a nice person.

Where do you usually sell Groundcover News?
On the corner of Washington and 4th Avenue, outside of Literati.

What is your favorite thing to do in Ann Arbor? Meet nice people.

What motivates you to work hard selling Groundcover News?
The nice people I meet motivate me, and the money too!

What was your first job?
McDonald's.

What are your hobbies?
Basketball.

What words do you live by?
My word is my bond.

What is something about you that someone on the street wouldn't know?
My dad, Gary R., sold Groundcover too.

Dear **Morgan**, thank you for your kind words and care whenever I stop and see you in front of the PFC. You always tell me to keep warm, even though you're the one staying out there in the cold. I hope this message will warm you up from the inside!

Sandra, thank you for using the opportunities at Groundcover to realize your dreams. Congratulations on your graduation!

Hi **Tre**, thank you for brightening my day with your gentle eyes every time we chat. Keep smiling!

Vendor Appreciation Week:
February 6-13, 2022

Show vendors how much they are valued in the community! There are many ways to get involved with Vendor Week festivities:

1. Bring a treat, snack or hot beverage during office hours for vendors to enjoy while buying papers (Monday-Saturday 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.).
2. Bring your vendor a hot chocolate or cup of coffee if you see them selling. It's cold out there!
3. Tip your vendor when buying a copy of Groundcover News.
4. Take a photo with your vendor or of your copy of Groundcover News, and share on social media. Tag us! @groundcovernews. We will be reposting all week.
5. Tell your Groundcover vendor how much you appreciate them and their steady presence in the community.
6. Talk to your friends and family about how selling Groundcover is legitimate work that changes lives.



dear **GROUNDCOVER VENDORS,**

Pony is my "go to" vendor for purchasing the Groundcover News. I enjoy our conversations and catching up with him whenever I see him on Sunday mornings. Thanks Pony for always being a friendly face.

Sometimes Ann Arbor can be a sellout of a city! But seeing you all downtown and in your regular spots, welcoming folks with a smile and a conversation, inspires me to see Ann Arbor as a strong community; as a place that practices inclusivity and solidarity. In Chicago, Streetwise vendors offer this same kind of community engagement in a city which is often hostile towards its unhoused communities. While Ann Arbor isn't as brutal of a place, you are all working to make it a better and more open city one paper at a time! Keep it up!

Dear **Joe & Jay**, your optimism and constant positive energy are so contagious! You never fail to make Logan and I laugh and seeing you two at Pizza in the Park is without a doubt the highlight of our week. You two are some of the most determined people we've ever met, keep up the great work!

Ken, thank you for teaching me how to be more human. (And for all the history lessons on the movement!) I hope I can carry the torch.

One thing that people might not know about **Jay** is that besides being a great talker, he's also an excellent listener. I'm really grateful for your attention when we have a conversation and for how much I've learned from you. Thank you!

Tony, thanks for the fun convos in front of Old Town, for your tips on bike safety, and for coming back to GCN after your bike accident! You're an inspiration.

James T. thank you for sharing your stories and passion for Italian food! I hope I'll be lucky enough to try your lasagna one day.

Hey **Justin**, your positive vibes are more contagious than COVID! Glad there isn't a vaccine for that. Thanks for being such a fun guy at Groundcover!

love, **YOUR CUSTOMERS**

734-544-3050 — a lifeline

On December 23, 2021, Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (WCCMH) announced that starting January 1, 2022 residents seeking substance use treatment can call the 24/7 hotline number 734-544-3050. This single access point hotline has trained clinicians who can connect you or the person you are concerned about to needed services regardless of ability to pay. Overall, this change will greatly reduce barriers to access; it will expedite getting help to those who need it.

This significant change comes at a critical moment. The isolation induced by the social distancing measures of the pandemic has only served to further increase unhealthy coping in the form of increased drug abuse nationwide.

For example, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration saw a 29% increase in calls to their national hotline from 2019 to 2020. More locally, over the last few years Washtenaw County has seen more deaths due to drug overdoses than car accidents. For example, in 2019 there were 82 drug overdose deaths compared to the 50 deaths due to motor vehicle accidents. For reference, these 82 drug overdoses make up 7% of all deaths reported to the Washtenaw County Medical Examiner.

The majority of these drug overdoses came from opioids, particularly fentanyl, which is an extremely potent synthetic opioid. Unfortunately, these rates of drug overdoses have been increasing rather than decreasing over the last five years, despite the widespread use of the life-saving drug naloxone. (Narcan, the brand name of naloxone, is a



BEN GIRODIAS
Groundcover contributor

nasal spray that blocks opioid receptors thereby preventing an overdose.)

But the toll comes from more than just overdoses. Almost everyone knows someone affected by substance use disorder (SUD). Because substance use can be such an intoxicating escape, many struggle to stop even when the marginal relief is far outweighed by the harmful consequences.

Long term substance abuse leads to a variety of mental, physical, and social health problems: physical impairment, organ damage, comorbidity with anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, or PTSD, withdrawal from friends and family, loss of employment and inability to afford stable housing, among others. According to the National Institute of Health, "about half of individuals who experience a SUD during their lives will also experience a co-occurring mental disorder and vice versa." In other words, there is a strong connection between substance use and mental distress.

Put succinctly, for many struggling with substance use, it is the cage not the drug that causes the problem. As described in Chasing the Scream by Johann Hari, many experiments in

the 1960s showed a very reproducible outcome of overdose when rats were hooked up to self-administrable substances. If a rat had access to a lever that delivered a dose of morphine, inevitably the rat would continue to press the lever until it died of an overdose. This followed the previous medical model of addiction where a user would become addicted simply through repeated exposure to a substance. You take more and more of it and eventually the physical and mental addiction develops.

Later, in the late 1970s, Dr. Bruce Alexander and his research team reconsidered the experiment. He asked himself how he would respond to being placed in an isolated cage with nothing to do but take morphine. He figured he probably would take increasingly high doses too. Instead, he and his team developed rat park: a large enclosure with food, toys, and other rats to play and mate with. The outcomes were immensely different. Not only were the rates of morphine use lower, but also physically addicted rats would resist their physical cravings when placed in rat park because they wanted to be mentally present for the fun. This radically differs from the numbing behavior of the rats when placed in isolation.

While the physical component of substance use should not be underplayed, we should not think of the physical mechanisms in isolation. The mental cage contributes heavily to increasing problems with substance use. Trauma correlates strongly with substance use, especially among those without healthier coping strategies and without access to proper mental health care. Hence, the importance of the Community

Mental Health single access point helpline. This allows for people to be treated holistically, which increases the likelihood of them getting the help that they need.

Community Mental Health can help with both mental illness and substance use. And because sooner rather than later is certainly better, increased mental care access decreases the severity of the related issues, which ultimately benefits everyone.

The average taxpayer agrees. As part of the approved 2017 mental health and public safety millage, in 2020 alone Community Mental Health has been able to provide over four million dollars worth of services to get people the help they need.

So what are you waiting for? If you or someone you know needs substance use or mental health treatment call the helpline today. Go ahead. Right now. I'll wait.

Quitting substances can be one of the most difficult things that a person will do in their entire life. Most can't do it alone, and there is no reason to. There are wonderful, supportive people right here in your local community, who can connect you to the services you need to get better. And that is what is always possible: it can get better. No matter how horrible it may seem, and lord knows life can at times be unbearably horrible, remember that it can get better. Please do get the help you need. Call 734-544-3050. It can get better.

While the hotline can be called to deal with mental health crises, call 911 for immediate medical emergencies like an overdose.

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed

for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.

- When selling Groundcover, I will always have the current biweekly issue of Groundcover available for customer purchase.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper or selling past monthly issues.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover

vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.

- I agree to treat all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.

- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.

- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

If you would like to report a violation of the Vendor Code please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

Join Ann Arbor's Zero Waste Challenge: February 6-12th

SAMUEL MCMULLEN
Live Zero Waste

Go zero waste with people all across Ann Arbor February 6-12. During the Zero Waste Challenge, you'll get an interactive map with participating local businesses, access to Live Zero Waste seminars and daily emails with tips and resources for living zero waste in Ann Arbor. You'll also be entered into a giveaway for a number of prizes, including a free used bike from Common Cycle, a gift certificate to BYOC Co., lunch at Ginger Deli and a Roos Roast Mason Jar Kit! And don't worry, there's no judgement if you accidentally make trash. Sign up at livezerowaste.org/a2

What counts as "zero waste"?

Anything *produced new* for you is considered to be "waste." This includes recyclables and any non-compostable packaging. Importantly it also means any appliances, t-shirts, bags, anything that you purchase new.

What if I produce trash or recycling during the challenge?

No worries! You're not in this to shame yourself into lowering your waste. It's all about understanding where your trash comes from, and collecting it over the course of a week is a really helpful way to get an idea where you can make improvements.

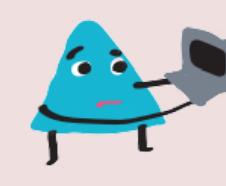
ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR CERA FUNDS HAVE CHANGED!



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online application

or COMPLETE A PAPER APP



Use the QR Code above or call 734-961-1999 to
get a paper application and mail it to HAWC @
100 Arbana Drive Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Have as many of these documents as possible ready:



Michigan
State ID*



2020 or 2021
Tax Return



Paystubs/proof of
income for the last
2 weeks



Recent Bank
Statement



Copy of lease and
information about
owed rent

Please note: All cases approved on or after January 1, 2022 must have rental arrears (money owed) dating between March 13, 2020 and before December 20, 2021 in order to be eligible for assistance.

***A Michigan State ID is now required to apply for CERA per the new eligibility requirements by the State of Michigan. Please visit SOS to obtain a state ID - proof of temporary state ID will also be accepted.**

Questions for Washtenaw CERA? We're here to help!
Submit your questions at bit.ly/CERA-Questions

**IF YOU ARE NO LONGER ELIGIBLE FOR
CERA, PLEASE CONTACT HAWC OR
DHHS FOR ASSISTANCE.**

Visit michiganlegalhelp.org or call 734-665-6181 for resources to help you if you have any legal questions or concerns.

Translation services are available with HAWC.

What's Happening at the Ann Arbor District Library

Open 10am-8pm Daily

Browse our shelves full of books, movies, CDs, art prints, musical instruments, board games, and more seven days a week. Study and meeting rooms are open at all five locations. Learn more at aadl.org/

Black History Month

AADL celebrates Black History Month with videos and events for all ages, plus photos from the AADL Archives, a self-guided walking tour of historically Black neighborhoods in Ann Arbor, and more. Visit aadl.org/blackhistorymonth

Fastest WiFi in Town

Every AADL location has login-free wireless inside all buildings and parking lots, available 24 hours a day. No restrictions, no monitoring, and some of the fastest speeds in town!

FEATURE EVENT



WASHTENAW **reads**

February 17, 4-5:30 pm

Washtenaw Reads Author Event: Judith Heumann with Kristen Joiner | *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* (Zoom event)

The Ann Arbor District Library is proud to welcome Judith Heumann and Kristen Joiner for an online author event to discussion of her memoir, *Being Heumann: an Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*, the 2022 Washtenaw Reads selection. This event will be recorded and available to watch after the event concludes.

Jack of the Dust

If you've read my other articles, then you know I was in the Navy. Well this is a story of one of my experiences.

While in the Navy I was a Culinary Specialist, aka a cook. Being a cook in the military does not mean you just cook food all day. Yes, that is the overall task, but we are in charge of maintaining the morale for anywhere from 300 to 7000 personnel daily while out at sea. Housekeeping, any social event needing food, 24/7, 365. When I first arrived at my ship, I was set up from the get-go.

My supervisor put me with another sailor who had been in for over four years. His job was "The Jack of the Dust," or JOD for short. He was in charge of ordering all the food supplies on board. We had to keep enough food stocked for a minimum 21 days for 300 personnel to eat three times daily. They keep count of all food that goes in and out and distribute it to the kitchen. This job is reserved for higher enlisted sailors because you have hundreds of thousands of dollars of product you're responsible for.

Eventually I'm working with this guy everyday, and he's showing me the job little by little. Showing me how "easy" it is and what it's "really" like.



JAY GORDON
Groundcover vendor No. 533

Lies!

He was hitting me with all the flim flam. So while on my first deployment, he's showing me the ropes, but mostly I'm doing the grunt work and he's doing the paperwork. Sometimes he let me do it, and if anything was wrong he'd simply correct it. I figured, cool. What he was doing was the set-up.

He and my supervisor were horrible at ordering protocols and staying in the black. When we got to Italy, "Order the finest of pastries!" In Greece, it was, "Order gyros for everyone." But they weren't writing these things down.

Now about halfway through deployment I sign paperwork taking over the duties of the JOD position. Big deal

since I was a junior sailor. At least that's what I thought. A week later my supervisor and my trainer were leaving the ship. They had been transferred and I was officially in charge of the food storage facilities. I was so happy for about a month.

That's when the jealousy of other sailors who wanted the position moved in; they would purposely over and under order so that I would always be behind in my work. Then the shoe dropped.

We were getting inspected for cleanliness, food taste, quality, service and records. I'm not tripping, that's when everything changed. My new supervisor asked to see the books. I was cool with it. The next thing you know, he comes barreling into my office, his face red as Rudolph's nose with a cold.

"What the @#\$% happened?! How? How!" he screamed. I didn't understand what he was referring to. He showed me the books and it said that

over 1.3 million dollars was missing. I had a heart attack. After we both calmed down we went reviewed everything for hours, and over everything that was on hand and figuring out what was there and what was not.

He saw the wines, the pastries, and other port specialties that were never written off, then he looked to see when I officially took over. When he saw the date and that nobody else had signed, he said the words I needed to hear, "Well you didn't **** this up." The feeling of weight lifting off my body felt so comforting.

Knowing I wasn't going to prison for embezzlement was great. I was upset that I was set up to be a fall guy, especially in the military. It was a good learning experience. Bad people do exist in the world and if you see them in a position or in a role that you would believe gives them a certain level of prestige or higher moral compass — watch them the most.

Big things happening with Boober



KEVIN SPANGLER
Groundcover vendor No. 307

so something better can happen. So now we embark on creating three rigs first for testing, then 50. We are currently picking between American made trans axles and motors.



Kevin Spangler on the cover of *Crazy Wisdom Community Journal* in 2021. Photo credit: Crazy Wisdom.

We have now gained enough knowledge on every aspect of the pedicab. We have learned all the faults and now we are putting together the best light electric vehicle known to man. Our goal/vision is a human electric powered vehicle that we use for travel for around 15 miles, with eventual power being from hydrogen — created on demand — from hydrogen batteries by 2036. We are building everything with the highest quality to have the least amount of maintenance. The main goal for this project is get people exercising more and creating less of an impact on the environment.

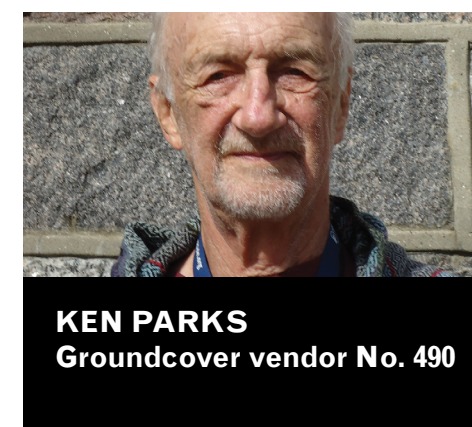
We were getting a Boober warehouse and expanding, but that didn't work out which did not bother me because when you are on the right track sometimes, something good doesn't happen

We have nothing to fear but fear itself

These words were spoken by Franklin Delano Roosevelt at his first inauguration in 1933. The world was in the Great Depression. Italian fascism had been in power since 1922 and German fascism was powerful. FDR was committed to Keynesian economics, that the state should intervene instead of letting the market run wild, as the solution to the capitalist crisis, with the New Deal (big spending) rather than fascism or communism. It took courage and confidence to choose that road because communism and fascism looked like the only choices. There was so much opposition that a coup to overthrow FDR was planned. Major General Smedley Butler refused to support the coup, and exposed it.

The ups and downs of capitalism are best summarized by a Talks At Google titled "Democracy At Work: Curing Capitalism" by Richard Wolff. He has fun talking beyond the research of his post-doctoral studies.

The fear we experience today is more complex and deeper than we could have imagined before 2008. President Obama won largely because his confidence, eloquence and commitment to American Exceptionalism looked like we could go back to "normal." Trump won because the suffering of the



KEN PARKS
Groundcover vendor No. 490

working class had spread into the middle class impacting European Americans in a way unknown to them.

Remember the origin of the "white race," the illusion that was launched after the defeat of Bacon's Rebellion, more than 100 years before the American Revolution. The blame game, one of the ancient games of divide and conquer, can be popular enough to get substantial votes. Taking responsibility for living in a dysfunctional system is not encouraged. You must work harder, faster, smarter and get less. The increased stress will bring some to blame liberals, conservatives, immigrants, the poor, especially people of color, anyone who is different. Maybe the solution is on your screen, and that

can become another addiction. Domination and fear are common addictions that distract from more creative alternatives.

The deciders have decided that China is the enemy. The public military budget is knocking on \$800 billion this year with the open goal of keeping China a second rate power in Asia. High tech weapons and manufacturing capacity are going to Taiwan. Let's remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. The plan to invade Cuba in the early 1960s was dropped. Kennedy headed towards detente.

We need to begin with understanding now and march away from a Formosan missile crisis and towards peace. Every step works if we take a natural breath that clarifies and empowers.

Imagine liberation from fear. It helps your immune system. Maybe we will see that Mother Nature is inseparable from human nature. Practicing a natural breath, in stillness and in motion, until it becomes a habit, is a great awakening. Look forward and remind yourself as you experience some of the bliss that grows best when dedicated for the benefit of all our relations. As creatures of Mother Nature we share the all-good expanse of primordial purity. When experiencing fear,

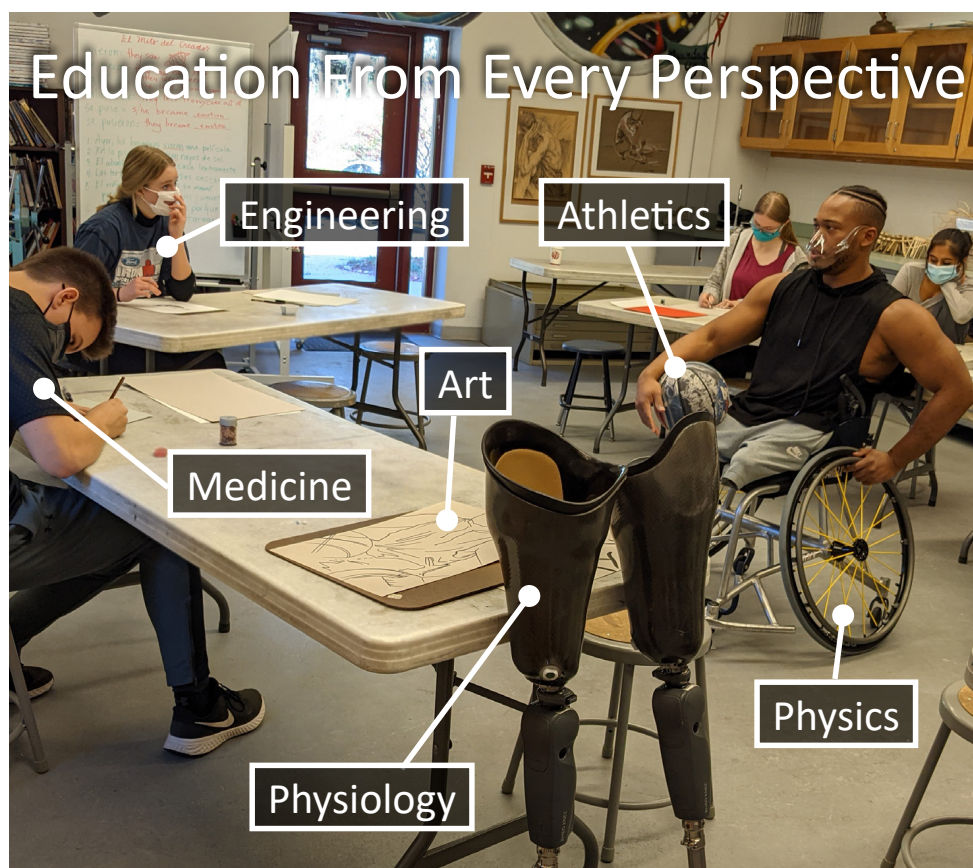
embrace it tenderly and it may turn to good power — now or later. This is certainly true if you free yourself from dualism, the habit of viewing the world as split into two parts, the most common being self and other. It's more fun to live in the reality of interrelatedness, observing distinctions without internalizing them.

When we are free from fear we can experience sarscovid2 as a messenger and take notes. Rob Wallace has done this. His latest book is "Dead Epidemiologists: On the Origins of COVID-19" and is reviewed in Monthly Review magazine.

I've been doing some homework in my golden years. It's time to tell the truth about who we are and communicate. Find those different than you and learn their story. Imagine being the daughter of a slave master and your best friend is a girl slave. They are both in "The Invention Of Wings."

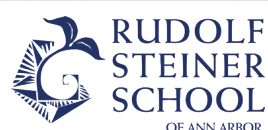
Margaret and Stanley Novak wrote "Two Who Were There" about the birth of the United Auto Workers. They were my parents' best friends. If you come to my place you can sit on the chairs I inherited from them.

May we meet in the Ann Arbor Community Commons and deepen the struggle for freedom.



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For seeing the BIG PICTURE

We're looking at where each of our institutions fit in the system. The millage supports collaborations that help us understand the roles we play in community mental health.

REILEY CURRAN
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT MANAGER,
ST. JOSEPH MERCY CHELSEA

CALL FOR MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE SUPPORT
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Affordable housing in crisis

"It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart."

— Matthew Desmond, American Sociologist



MARTIN STOLZENBERG
Groundcover contributor

The housing situation is reaching a critical point in some of our larger cities. The media is replete with stories that homelessness is a rampant epidemic. The problems of affordable housing, or the lack of affordable housing, and homelessness are inexorably linked. When affordable housing goes down, homelessness goes up. Things are so bad that it has become commonplace for people to be relieving themselves in the streets of San Francisco.

And nationwide, the affordable housing situation has gotten out of control. As recently as 2012, 78% of homes were affordable for a typical family. As a result of skyrocketing prices, it's getting harder for Americans to afford homes. Just 56.6% of homes sold during the second quarter of 2020 were affordable to families earning a typical income. That was down from 63.1% in the first quarter of this 2021 and 66% in the first quarter of 2020. According to the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index Administration rule-of-thumb, housing should be no more than 30% of income. If you are one of the lucky ones earning \$200,000 a year, then you can scrape by with a monthly housing charge of around \$5,000. But if your household makes \$50,000 a year, close to the median average in this country, you should be paying no more than \$1,250 a month for housing, and that might get you a modest two-bedroom apartment. And if you make less, like \$20,000 to \$40,000, you're in major trouble.

Remember that 30% — that is the high water mark you should be paying for rent or housing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development says that 50% of renters are "cost burdened," that is, spending more than that 30% level on their housing. Worse still, 12 million Americans spend more than 50% of their income on housing. That means they are probably doing without other necessities, like food, clothing and medical care, to pay the rent.

There is plenty of upscale housing around because that is where the money is. Developers are clamoring to put up luxury apartment houses in our cities and ritzy homes in the suburbs. Construction for high-end housing continually goes up, while housing for low-income people declines. It is

estimated that there is a shortage of close to seven million affordable homes for the lowest-income renters. That means that there is affordable, decent housing available for only 37 renters out of 100, leaving many with two choices: live in substandard housing or become homeless. More people have low incomes than at any time since the Depression years, and without housing options they face eviction, instability and homelessness.

And the high cost of living has led to a new phenomenon, the working homeless. Megan Hustings, director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, says that between 40 and 60% of the homeless population floated in and out of full-time and part-time work in 2018. And one-quarter of them slept outdoors.

As rents go up, there are more people living in shelters, tent cities and parking lots with their vehicles. Poor families are having an increasingly difficult time finding affordable places to live in large cities due to high rents, static incomes and a shortage of housing. Perhaps one benefit of the recent Covid-19 pandemic is that a lot of office space is going begging, as many companies are giving up their office space on a permanent basis. There is talk of realtors turning some of this empty space into apartments.

Up until President Biden's proposed multi-trillion dollar legislation, Congress for many years has disregarded our lower income citizens. This hadn't always been the case. Fifty years ago, adjusting for inflation, the federal budget authority for housing assistance was nearly three times what it is today. This is despite a significant growth in the number of those eligible for housing assistance.

It's not that most people want this situation to continue. A poll commissioned by Citilab shows that a high proportion of Americans (85%) believe that ensuring everyone has a safe, decent, affordable home should be a top national priority. And over 80% think we should do more to prevent homelessness and that Congress should take major action to make



By Victoria Samra

housing more affordable for low-income people.

As a major portion of the \$1.9 trillion-dollar Reconciliation Bill, President Biden proposes that a whopping \$300 billion be allocated for the Affordable Housing in America Jobs Plan. Money would be allocated for construction and preservation of homes that are affordable for people of the lowest incomes, and to preserve the nation's public housing stock. Notably missing is expanding rental assistance to eligible households.

Until now developers have had no great incentive to put up modest housing. The dollars didn't work out. It will be a changed ballgame if the Infrastructure Bill becomes law. Developers are always strapped for cash. Here is where the Federal government can step in. A developer receives a federal tax credit if they allocate 20% of their apartments to people of moderate means, thereby creating mixed housing.

In addition, there are state and local sources for additional ways to sweeten the pot, for developers to get more funding to encourage them to build affordable units mixed in with more expensive ones. This also helps counter the homogeneity that is so prevalent in our society. Still, there aren't enough developers taking advantage of these incentives and there aren't enough

credits being granted. The levels of the credit grants must be increased beyond the current level of 20%, perhaps to 30% or even higher, and the process simplified so more builders will wish to develop this mixed housing.

Creating individual housing for low-income people can provide the pride of ownership that will make for viable communities. In urban areas there would be a mix of affordable rentals and low-income private homes. This is what was done so successfully in our country after World War II, mostly for returning veterans. We should replicate this in an updated form, to make home ownership viable for low-income people through government subsidies. There should be expanded national programs that provide housing education to assist eligible people on how to obtain the necessary financing for homes.

It can be done. One example of this is Salt Lake City. The Mayor, Jackie Biskupski, in August 2018 announced a plan whereby 2,000 new affordable units would be built in the next several years, to counter the current shortfall of 7500 units. This was done by waiving fees to encourage developers to build more affordable units. There are other facets to Salt Lake City's affordable

see **HOUSING** next page ➡

ARPA funds survey out now! Affordable housing projects need your support

LINDSAY CALKA
Publisher

On March 11, 2021 President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act which provides financial support to local governments to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of last year, Washtenaw County was allocated \$71 million and underwent a public input process to determine how the ARPA money should be spent. Now it's the City of Ann Arbor's turn. Ann Arbor was allocated \$24.1 million and the public process has already begun — and it's happening fast due to federally mandated spending deadlines.

At the end of January, city staff held multiple 90-minute online meetings to elicit public comment. All of the 13 proposed projects were presented, critiqued and advocated for by community members. Two of the projects being considered — Housing for Homeless Households and Property Acquisition for Affordable Housing — will begin to address the housing crisis in Ann Arbor.

In addition to a rising population due to increased U-M admissions and an influx of capital into downtown, the few affordable units we have in Ann Arbor are expiring. That means that not only is the increased market demand driving up the cost of living in Ann Arbor, but the units that were sanctioned to be affordable are disappearing. Between 2015 and 2021, over 1,000 units of affordable housing have been lost, and under 200 have been added. (At the public meeting I attended, I learned that the County has an affordable housing dashboard — that has not been updated since March of last year — where I pulled some of this data from.)

Aubrey Patino, director of Avalon Housing, emphasized in the public meeting that the many agencies in the county addressing homelessness and poverty are barely supporting the current need of homelessness community, and that they will not be able to support this need for much longer at the rate we are losing affordability.

The Housing for Homeless Households project will provide new housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and will leverage funds from other sources to

access rental subsidies and supportive services. For this project, the Ann Arbor Housing Commission will partner with Avalon Housing to provide permanent supportive housing. This will not be transitional housing.

The Property Acquisition for Affordable Housing would acquire property to build affordable housing. This project would involve identifying a suitable property, conducting due diligence on that property, and acquiring the property. Renovation would be done, as needed, or if the land is vacant, the project would require developing a site plan and going through a site plan approval process, followed by construction.

The outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community have not fully actualized yet. This federal funding is for recovery, and I foresee our ability to recover hinging on support of the most vulnerable to the negative effects of the pandemic: those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

We are in the public survey part of this public process. This survey can be accessed at a2gov.org/rescue-funds. I urge readers to take this survey, and vote for the two housing projects already mentioned, and other projects that address poverty and racial inequality: Universal Basic Income, Coordinated Funding Support and Unarmed Response Program.

After completion of the survey process, City Council will take community input into consideration to make the final decision about what projects receive ARPA funds. So, take the survey and contact your council member to take your vote a little further. Or attend the March city council meetings to voice your opinion during public comment. It is not often we have the power of the purse.



Scan to take the survey today!

Groundcover Principles as a Statement of Solidarity with Humanity

From its inception, **Groundcover News** has approached all its activities with belief in the following principles, as written on our website:

- All people have the right to dignity.
- Diversity has intrinsic value.
- Poverty is political — systemic change is necessary.
- Building community is essential to social change.
- Political effectiveness requires staying power.
- Solutions to poverty must involve people who are directly affected.
- Risks are necessary to create positive change.
- Meeting people where they are honors their skills and potential.
- We are committed to quality, professionalism, and accountability in everything we do.

We feel our attachment to these principles even more strongly today. If they resonate with you too, and you are looking for a way to make a difference during these life-changing times, please join us as a volunteer, supporter, friend or Board Member. To let us know, email: contact@groundcovernews.com.

➡ **HOUSING** from last page

housing program. The city also expanded fee waivers for developers who set aside 20% of a project's units for low-income residents. In a short period of time, three developers signed up for the new program.

Also, a new 0.25% general sales tax will be used to invest in affordable housing programs. Salt Lake City has also created an affordable housing renovation program, to help landlords improve the quality of their units. The city understands there is no one single solution, but a coordinated program is required to bring about a better housing situation within a five-year period.

This \$300 billion for low-income housing is a lot of money, but it should be remembered, when there is inadequate housing and homelessness, there is a crisis of increased health care costs, lost work productivity, decreased educational attainment, lowered tax revenues and more social instability leading to disrupted families. That is a bigger price to pay.

By putting up the money, and developing programs that stimulate more affordable housing, we will create our own Marshall Plan. This is the time to do something that will lift our whole society.



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KC Tenants offers a model of possibility for fed up tenants worldwide

ANN-DERRICK GAILLOT
INSP freelance journalist

When the members of KC Tenants show up together in their yellow shirts, they come boldly proclaiming their demands on their backs: “What we want is safe, accessible, and truly affordable homes.” KC Tenants leader Diane Charity reads the black print to me over the phone from Kansas City, Missouri, where the tenants union and advocacy group is based. She emphasizes the last demand with a straightforwardness that has come to define the group’s approach to creating change. “Truly affordable homes doesn’t mean that these out-of-state people that come in and get all this funding to make these affordable houses [that are] cheaply made,” she says. “Hike the rent up every year to the point where it puts us out, which gentrifies our neighborhood, and then they act like they’re doing us a favor.”

Rather, KC Tenants, made up of members of the city’s communities of renters, fights for cooperative housing, social housing and a dignified response to the city’s housing, eviction, and homelessness crises. And ever since its formation in 2019, it’s made its demands for a better world known through carefully-researched policy proposals as well as direct actions matching the urgency of the issues they’re addressing.

From leaders chaining themselves to a county courthouse door in an effort to stop eviction court proceedings to confronting city Mayor Quinton Lucas at a protest at City Hall, KC Tenants has never taken it easy on Kansas City’s elected officials. And why would they?

Its members experience the harms of the city’s long-standing affordable housing and eviction crisis first-hand on a daily basis. “One of our founding philosophies is that we are the experts on housing,” says Charity, who was a founding member of KC Tenants alongside Founding Director Tara Raghuvver, Board President Tiana Caldwell, and Brandy Granados. “We are the experts because we have the lived experience.”

On the day of our interview (18 November 2021), Charity and her fellow KC Tenants members were preparing for the organization’s town hall with the Mayor in attendance. That evening, organizers led those gathered at the auditorium of a local school, with hundreds more viewing on Facebook Live. It included an opening song, a panel answering questions on social housing and the group’s plans for a Housing Trust Fund, and testimony from renters in the audience on their visions for housing in the city.

KC Tenants has consistently kept pressure on Lucas to listen to and face the city’s most housing-vulnerable residents ever since his election to the office just months after the group was founded. At their dogged insistence, he spent his first night as mayor in the substandard apartment one KC Tenants member lived in with her children, complete with sorely-needed but unprovided repairs and the sounds of gunshots outside. The group’s creative direct action sent a clear message to city officials: Kansas City’s tenants are taking power into their own hands.

As in other American cities, renters in Kansas City face rising rents, a dearth of affordable housing, and a

general attitude of disdain for the many struggling with housing insecurity and homelessness. But in recent years, by harnessing the power of grassroots organizing, an extensive, months-long research project examining other cities, and unrelenting hope, KC Tenants has managed to achieve big wins for the city’s tenants. These included successfully advocating for the city’s adoption of a historic Tenants Bill of Rights in 2020. “All of these politicians that talked so condescendingly towards it said, ‘We’ll write that ordinance for you and then we’ll get it passed.’ And we said, ‘No, you won’t. You won’t write anything because you don’t live our experience,’” remembers Charity about the fight for the Tenants Bill of Rights. In her eyes, the group rejects a local tradition of polite passivity and confrontation avoidance known in the area as ‘Kansas City Nice.’

The kind of determination KC Tenants uses to keep public officials engaged and held accountable to their constituents may go against the grain of ‘Kansas City Nice.’ However, Charity surmises that sticking to a ‘Kansas City Nice’ attitude does nothing for the fight for truly affordable housing. “We’re saying we’re not taking that BS anymore. We do have rights and we will stand up,” she says. “We’re that beam of light that people are saying, ‘Wow, These people have the nerve to think that they’re going to get the world as it is.’ And that is what we’re doing. We know it can be better.”

Kansas City, smack dab in the Midwest in a Republican-led state, is often overlooked in the national

conversation about the U.S.’s housing crisis. And yet the KC Tenants union’s successes and structure — which includes a hotline, a team that researches and crafts policy, a team that organizes tenants unions, and a team that helps tenants fight evictions as well as unfair and illegal housing practices — offers a model of possibility for fed up tenants worldwide.

It entered 2021 in high gear, proclaiming the months ahead the Year of the Tenant, beginning with Zero Eviction January, during which the group’s members took direct action to delay more than 900 eviction hearings that month. Then, after months of advocacy and organizing, the group helped win funding for an Office of the Tenant Advocate to enforce the Tenants Bill of Right in Spring 2021. It ended the year with another major victory: the city council passed an ordinance providing legal counsel to tenants, no matter what their income is. Drafted and pushed by KC Tenants, along with fellow advocacy groups the Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom and the Missouri Workers Center/Stand Up KC, the historic program is slated to be in place by summer 2022. Now, the union is pushing for an ordinance it drafted for a People’s Housing Trust Fund that calls for the city to divert funding from policing and tax incentives for developers into permanently establishing and maintaining affordable housing.

Though many cities already have housing trust funds in place, KC Tenants hopes to establish one with crucial safeguards in place as far as tenant

see TENANTS next page ➡

Sudoku ★★★★★ 4puz.com

	9	1	3	6				
4		6						
3				8		6	5	
					4		7	
1	2		5		6		4	8
	4		7					
	5	3		7				4
						2		6
				9	3	7	1	

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

➡ TENANTS from last page

rights and representation in governance, avoiding creating another “slush fund for developers and property owners,” as the group says in its fund proposal released in June 2021. “We can fight for something. We may not get everything, but if we start with housing, that’s a start for us. Then we can go on to the next thing and the next thing,” Charity says. “But if you don’t have a place to lay your head — to actually sleep and then get dressed to go to school and work the next morning — it’s the scariest thing that can ever happen to you, you know? It’s unfathomable that people are doing that.”

Though every community has its

unique struggles, Charity’s advice for people looking to start their own tenants unions is the same. “Give grace. Give grace to whomever you’re speaking with. Listen to them and allow them to tell their story,” she says. “[Whatever] their walk of life, they have that seed of hope in them that things will get better. We spark that seed of hope and it takes us to where we’re trying to get to obtain safe, truly affordable housing that’s accessible for anyone and everyone. Housing is a human right.”

Ann-Derrick Gaillot is a freelance journalist and writer based in Missoula, Montana. Find more of her work at annderrickgaillot.contently.com.

Courtesy of INSP North America / International Network of Street Papers.



NotThat Simple
by Tracy Bennett and Victor Fleming

ACROSS

1 LSD, to some

5 Quebecois companion

8 Some Taubman Center staffers, briefly

11 "Tidy" total

14 Needle material before the Industrial Revolution

15 Ancient hand stencils, e.g.

17 Deductions itemizer, briefly

18 Start of Lent

20 Say a bit more

21 Govt. spy group

22 Chem or Bio, e.g.

23 Prefix for cycle or angle

24 Rickman or Turing

25 Like new candles

27 Fresh start, metaphorically

30 Observed

31 Something hazardous

32 Cary who played three roles in "The Princess Bride"

33 Campfire treat

35 Long, epic narratives

36 Hoped-for cloud quality

39 Athletic footwear brand

41 Montoya played by Mandy Patinkin in "The Princess Bride"

42 Touched up, as one's nails

43 Won every game in a series, say

45 Arrests

49 Oddly-shaped fossil with a magical name

51 Kidney-related

52 British Tolkien creatures

53 Boardroom VIP

54 Messenger molecule

56 "American Auto" actress Gasteyer

57 Carnival city, familiarly

58 Ethical ambiguities ... or more literally, what the tinted words in this puzzle are

61 Room with a gaming console, typically

62 Country folk music icon Harris

63 Clearasil target

64 Memphis-to-Mobile dir.

65 Spectrum Center library namesake and long-time local LGBTQIA+ activist Jim

66 University ____ (place to stay on Stadium)

67 Roe producer

28 Act the villain

29 Vincent's successor as MLB's commissioner

31 State-runners like Gretchen Whitmer: Abbr.

34 Quaint address for a noblewoman

35 Still competing for the win

36 Versatile polymer in compound rubber

37 Security interest

38 It's less common to meet this way these days

39 Provides

40 Personal journals

43 Like many a romance novel

44 Cowboy rag doll in "Toy Story"

46 Anti-government revolutionary

47 Bread or pudding ingredient

48 Received many a laugh from

50 Ordinary guy

51 "Their Finest Hour" fighters, for short

55 "Sentence" in this sentence, for one

58 Established

59 Horror film director Roth

60 Fuel sold at Mallek's service station

DOWN

1 Something kids can count on?

2 Triangle ratio

3 Wolf down, figuratively

4 Blanket of the morning

5 Kind of power supply

6 Spa offering

7 "Now ____ seen everything!"

8 Light cotton fabric woven in India

9 Spot for a small eddy

10 Pen filled with swirl

11 Amusingly mischievous rascal

12 Appraised of the latest

13 March ____ (NCAA tournament)

16 Colorado's ____ Park

19 Superlative suffix

24 Promo word for a multi-purpose product

26 Those who know the scoop

5 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6 3 2 5 4 8 6 1 7

4 6 8 1 7 9 3 5 2

3 9 1 8 2 7 5 4 6

8 4 6 9 3 5 7 2 1

2 7 5 4 1 6 8 3 9

1 5 9 6 8 4 2 7 3

6 9 2 7 3 1 5 9 8 4

7 4 8 7 4 8 2 4 8 7

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Chickpea vegetable soup

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

This healthy Chickpea Vegetable Soup recipe is very simple to make. Just add everything except the cheese and parsley to a soup pot and simmer.

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 yellow onion, diced
3 carrots, sliced into thin rounds
3 celery stalks, thinly sliced
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 bay leaf
salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste
1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed well
1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained (I like fire-roasted)
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
4 cups vegetable broth
1/2 cup water
2/3 cup sliced mushrooms
2/3 cup chopped fresh green beans
shredded Parmesan cheese, for serving (optional)
chopped fresh parsley, for serving (optional)



Directions:

Heat butter and oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, celery, garlic, bay leaf, salt and pepper; stirring occasionally, cook for 6 to 8 minutes, or until vegetables are tender. Stir in chickpeas and tomatoes; season with turmeric. Add vegetable broth and water; mix until well combined, turn up heat to high and bring mixture to a boil. Lower heat to a simmer, add green beans and mushrooms, and continue to cook for 10 to 15 more minutes. Taste for seasonings and adjust accordingly. Garnish with parmesan cheese and parsley.



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"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me."
+ Christ Jesus (John 8:42)

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